



Editorial

Spanish success and its influence on sports marketing

These are exciting times for Spanish sport. In Formula 1, Fernando Alonso recorded back-to-back World Championship victories over two seasons, and in recent years Spain has taken world titles in basketball and handball as well as the Davis Cup in tennis. Yet Spain's impact upon world sport is not limited by its national boundaries. Colonial history means that its influence has spread to successful sports teams from many countries: Argentina reigns as Olympic basketball champion; and performers such as baseball players Alex Rodriguez and Albert Pujols, both of whom are of Hispanic origin, have been voted the most valuable players in the United States.

Spanish performances on the field of play have been matched by developments off the field. Real Madrid is now commonly identified as the world's most valuable football brand, and the club is pursuing a vigorous international marketing strategy; FC Barcelona has shown that sponsorship and marketing can have both an ethical and a socially responsible basis following its innovative deal with UNICEF to advertise on the team shirts; and the dynamism of Spanish sport looks set to continue, with the 32nd America's Cup taking place in Valencia in 2007.

This special edition is intended to be both a celebration of Spanish success and a vehicle to highlight the development of sports marketing thought in the Spanish-speaking world; in particular, it serves as a helpful counterpoint to the Anglo-American view of sports marketing that has increasingly dominated the way in which academics and practitioners have addressed emerging issues.

It is to be hoped that the *Journal* will continue to draw papers from across the world and not just from North America, the United Kingdom and Australia. Not only is sport universally popular, the distinctive nature of many sports and sports markets means that there is a real need to enhance our understanding of them. By examining theory and practice from different socio-cultural and geographical perspectives, we will

possibly help the wider sporting world to learn and explain developments taking place in other contexts.

This is most aptly illustrated by recent criticisms levelled at 'the dash for China'. Many western sports have recently engaged in market development and market-entry strategies in the country, with varying degrees of success. Some have suggested that western sports organisations are in effect sporting imperialists with little regard for local conditions. While this is not an entirely unjustified view, it nevertheless raises some important issues regarding the specific nature of sport, sports marketing, fans, acceptable forms of promotion and so on.

Some critics have argued that western organisations have employed bland, simplistic, even brutal approaches to marketing, reducing both fan and partner to a homogenous mass. Rather than adopting this kind of generic approach, the understanding of the specific nature of demand, motivation, distribution and so on is an important task for all sports marketers. It is therefore vital that journals such as this make a significant contribution to promoting insight and understanding.

We do this by attracting high-quality papers written by leading experts from countries across the world. It is hoped that academics and practitioners from countries such as China will therefore draw from the experience of the work in this Spanish edition to help us promote the continuing global development of sports marketing and sponsorship.

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